

4 August 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Director - Comptroller

SUBJECT: Effective Lateral Communications

The lack of effective communications between individuals, components, or directorates can handicap the intelligence analyst, technician, case officer and manager alike. Lateral communication sometimes is viewed as unnecessary and contrary to "need to know" compartmentation. However, the younger officer especially has sought his counterpart in other parts of the Agency with benefit to both intelligence production and operations. The difficulty of defining the lateral communication "problem" was emphasized in MAG's discussions. Some MAG members felt that the problem was essentially that people did not know with whom to communicate. Others felt that the real problem was to establish effective communication between people who already know of their mutual existence and concerns. MAG considered the subject and attempted to identify successful communications techniques employed by some in the Agency which could be used by others.

The most common approach to effective communications involves personal relationships and usually takes the form of knowing key people or components knowledgeable about a particular area. These interrelationships depend very much upon personalities, mutual respect, personal needs and inadequacies. Much of this communication is on an informal basis but can be formalized. The situation of learning only too late about pertinent work or capabilities of people could be alleviated by a more organized way to identify key people in a directorate or division whom one could contact for overall direction or information. Certain people in any directorate seem to have this capability either through innate ability or their function in the organization structure which gives them an overall view of office personnel and activities. These points of contact should be more clearly identified for all. Another useful mechanism enhancing communication with the appropriate people is the use of a functional directory such as the one published by OCS.

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An additional method of effective communication has been used in times of crisis, for example, by OCI. A task force is set up to ensure that all interested parties are in touch and contributing necessary information. People with specialized interest and knowledge in a particular country or problem are identified and a roster is made with names, phone numbers, and special area of expertise. Such a roster probably would include names of economic, political, military, scientific, estimative, and operational specialists. On any given problem, then, these people are ready and available. Sometimes meetings involving all of the people on the task force are set up so that all have a chance to exchange ideas and discuss probable events and implications. Modification of this concept might be workable even in the absence of a crisis. Lists of people with specialized interest or knowledge could be assembled and fed into a computer and made available to interested individuals.

The concept of a roster of personnel with specialized knowledge can even be extended. Practical implementation would involve providing a cross-indexed computer tabulation which identifies specific subjects and knowledgeable individuals or Agency components. It is envisioned that this data bank would reflect more than just those "experts" in a particular field. Rather, it would, to a manageable level of detail, truly reflect the activity within the Agency. This data bank would be updated regularly as "expertise" is developed within a given office or division. Younger officers who have not yet learned how to work the informal communications channels would benefit greatly by being able to tap this data bank. An important aspect of this question relates to a certain amount of middle management "inertia" which is believed to exist within the Agency. Many managers seem reluctant to search for outside expertise almost to the point of discouraging the use of the informal communications paths. If a data bank such as discussed above is to be beneficial its use must be encouraged from the top down to overcome this management inertia at whatever level it exists. Finally, security can be maintained; a valid case can be made for not making the details of the entire data bank available. At the office level an individual can act as the interface between the officers in the division and the data bank. Such an individual having the need to know

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and aware of the information needs of personnel in his division can query the data bank to identify the experts in other offices or to identify other components where related work is being carried out. Further, this individual being knowledgeable of the activity within his office would be responsible for ensuring that his part of the data bank is current.

The Agency spends a good deal of money each year sending people to conferences and seminars. The knowledge we collectively have in the Agency also is significant but unfortunately we seldom utilize the specialized knowledge our own people have to inform each other. Perhaps twice a year groups of interested individuals (compiled and available from the computer) could get together in a conference or seminar environment. The agenda should be flexible but include presentations and discussion from people with differing kinds of specialized knowledge (whether it's all of the French experts, groups of computer people or all those who worry about space or missile problems). Even though on a working basis many of us are in regular or informal contact with our counterpart in other parts of the Agency we seldom take time for a thorough and thought-provoking session. The organization of the meeting could be a cooperative venture with the agenda and participants worked out by the Directorates and the mechanics by the Office of Training.

Other means contributing to effective lateral communications are participation in training classes such as the DDS&T Career Development Course and all inter-directorate courses (Mid Career, Intelligence and World Affairs, Advanced Intelligence Seminar, and Senior Seminar). These courses serve to demonstrate positive implications of lateral communication between operational and analytical components. One of the most helpful fallouts from these sessions is the contacts made with people from other components and directorates. Similar experiences can be gained in attending in-house seminars and technical working sessions such as the recent Human Factors Seminar and the working groups under the R&D technical coordinating committee.

MAG believes that lateral communication should be encouraged by management. While many intelligence officers

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will communicate on their own once they know with whom to get in touch, others must be encouraged as they are encouraged by their managers in other respects. Managers should make it clear from the outset of an employee's assignment that they support lateral communication and that the officer is expected to keep in touch with his counterparts in other components and directorates. The Executive Director's recent memorandum on Country Seminars, which MAG saw when in the final stages of preparing this report, is an excellent example of management support for lateral communications.

Management Advisory Group